



THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

BY:

MUHAMMAD
HUSEIN
HAYKAL

TRANSLATED FROM THE
8TH EDITION

BY

ISMA'IL RĀGĪ A. AL FĀRŪQĪ

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SHOROUK
INTERNATIONAL

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LONDON: 316/318 Regent St. (Morley House), W1, UK. - Tel. 580 9819 - Telex SHOROK 25779G

CAIRO: 16 Gawad Husni St. - Tel. 774814/774578 - Telex SHROK 93091 UN - Cable SHOROUK

BEIRUT: P.O. Box 8064 - Tel. 315859/315101 - Telex SHOROK 20175 LE - Cable DASHOROUK

Contents

<i>Foreword to the First Edition</i>	xiii
<i>Preface to the First Edition</i>	xxiii
<i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>	xlvii
<i>Preface to the Third Edition</i>	lxxxvii
1. Arabia before Islām	3
2. Makkah, the Ka'bah, and the Quraysh	22
3. Muḥammad: from Birth to Marriage	46
4. From Marriage to Prophethood	63
5. From the Beginning of Revelation to the Conversion of 'Umar	76
6. The Story of the Goddesses	105
7. The Malevolent Conduct of Quraysh	115
8. From the Violation of the Boycott to al Isrā'	131
9. The Two Covenants of al 'Aqabah	148
10. Al Hijrah, or the Prophet's Emigration	163
11. Beginning of the Yathrib Period	173
12. The First Raids and Skirmishes	200
13. The Great Battle of Badr	216
14. Between Badr and Uḥud	242

15.	The Campaign of Uḥud	253
16.	The Effects of Uḥud	271
17.	The Prophet's Wives	285
18.	The Campaigns of al Khandaq and Banū Qurayzah	299
19.	From the Two Campaigns to the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah	317
20.	The Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah	340
21.	The Campaign of Khaybar and Missions to Kings	360
22.	The 'Umrah or Lesser Pilgrimage	380
23.	The Campaign of Mu'tah	387
24.	The Conquest of Makkah	395
25.	Campaigns of Ḥunayn and al Ṭā'if	414
26.	Ibrahīm and the Wives of the Prophet	429
27.	Campaign of Tabūk and the Death of Ibrahīm	443
28.	The Year of Deputations and Abū Bakr's Leadership of the Pilgrimage	456
29.	The Farewell Pilgrimage	475
30.	The Prophet's Sickness and Death	489
31.	The Prophet's Burial	504

Conclusion in Two Essays

I.	Islāmic Civilization as Depicted in the Qur'ān	517
II.	Islāmic Civilization and the Western Orientalists	555

	<i>Notes and References</i>	595
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	<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	615
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	<i>Index of Proper Names</i>	619
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Foreword to the The Life of Muhammad

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

Foreword to the First Edition

Ever since man appeared on earth he has been anxious to penetrate the universe and discover its laws and secrets. The more he came to know, the more he wondered at its greatness, the weaker he appeared to himself and the less reason he saw for vanity. The Prophet of Islām—may God's peace be upon him—is very much like the universe. From the very beginning, scholars worked hard to uncover various aspects of his great humanity, to grasp the realization of the divine attributes in his mind, character and wisdom. Certainly they achieved a fair measure of knowledge. Much however has escaped them; and there still lies ahead a long and indeed infinite road.

Prophethood is a gift which cannot be acquired. In His wisdom God grants it to whosoever stands prepared for it and is capable of carrying it. He knows best when and where it will be of most benefit. Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—was indeed prepared to carry the prophetic message unto all the races of mankind. He was equipped to carry the message of the most perfect religion, to be the final conclusion of prophethood, the unique light of guidance for ever and ever.

The infallibility of the prophets in the conveyance of their message and the performance of their divine trust is a matter on which the scholars have agreed for a long time. Once they are chosen for their task, the prophets' conveyance of their message and their performance of the duties entrusted to them carry no reward. Their work is a necessary consequence of such divine

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revelation. Like all men, prophets are truly fallible; their distinction lies in that God does not leave them in their error. He corrects them and often even blames them therefor.

Muhammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—was commanded to convey a divine message. But he was not shown how to carry it out nor how to protect the fruits of his work. It was left to him as any rational and sentient being to conduct his affairs as his intelligence and wisdom might dictate. The revelation which he received was absolutely precise and clear in all that concerns the essence, unity, attributes and worship of God. But this was not the case as regards the social institutions of family, village and city, the state in its relations with the said institutions and with other states. There is hence wide scope for research on the Prophet's greatness before his commission as prophet, as there is after his commission had taken place. He became a messenger for his Lord, calling men unto Him, protecting the new faith and guaranteeing the freedom and security of its preachers. He became the ruler of the *Ummah* of Islām,¹ its commander in war and teacher, the judge and organizer of all its internal and foreign affairs. Throughout his career he established justice and reconciled hopelessly disparate and hostile nations and groups. His wisdom, farsightedness, perspicacity, presence of mind and resoluteness are evident in all that he said or did. From him streams of knowledge have sprung and heights of eloquence have arisen to which the great bend their heads in awe and wonder. He departed from this world satisfied with his work, assured of God's pleasure and crowned with the gratitude of men.

All these aspects of the Prophet's life deserve special study and research. It is not possible for any one scholar to give them their due; nor to exhaust the meanings inherent in any one of them.

Like that of any other great man, the biography of Muhammad—may God's blessing be upon him and upon his house—has been expanded by many an imaginary story, whether innocently or with ulterior motive, deliberately or accidentally. Unlike all other biographies, however, a great portion of it has been included in the divine revelation and has thus been preserved forever in the pure Qur'ān. Another fair portion has been safely preserved for us by trustworthy narrators. From these unmistakable sources the biography of the Prophet should be constructed, and on their basis its hidden meanings and complicated problems should be investigated, and its moral established. Its

constitutive materials should be subjected to objective and scholarly analysis taking well into consideration the circumstances of time and environment as well as the prevalent beliefs, institutions and customs.

In his book, *The Life of Muhammad*, Dr. Haykal gave us the biography of the Prophet—may God's peace and blessings be upon him—which I have had the pleasure of reading in part before printing. Dr. Haykal is well known to the Arabic reader; his many books obviate the need for an introduction. He studied law and familiarized himself with logic and philosophy. His personal circumstances and career enabled him to study ancient as well as modern culture and to learn a great deal from both. He lectured on and debated, attacked and defended many questions of belief, of social organization and politics. The maturity of his mind is matched by the perfection of his knowledge, and the wide range of his readings. He debates with powerful, convincing arguments and he treats his subject with sound logic and a style all his own. Such preparation stands behind Dr. Haykal's book. In his Preface, Dr. Haykal wrote: "No one should think that research in the life of Muhammad is completed with this work; and I am far from making any such claim. It is closer to the truth for me to say that my work is really only the beginning of scientific research in this field in Arabic."² The reader might be surprised if the strong resemblance of the modern scientific method to the call of Muhammad is pointed out. The former demands that the investigator suspend his own beliefs and refrain from prejudgment, to begin his investigation with observation of the data, and then to proceed to experimentation, comparison, classification and finally to conclusion based upon these objective steps. A conclusion thus arrived at is scientific in that it is itself subject to further testing and critical analysis. It is reliable only as long as further scientific investigations do not disprove any of the premises on which it is based. True, the scientific method is the highest achievement of the human race in its effort to liberate man's thought, but it is precisely the method of Muhammad and the foundation of his call.

Dr. Haykal's new method is truly Qur'anic. For he has made reason the judge, and evidence the foundation, of knowledge. He has repudiated conservatism and castigated the conservatives. Agreeing with the Qur'anic principle "opinion and speculation are no substitute for true knowledge" (Qur'an, 53:28), Dr. Haykal has chastised those who speculate without evidence; who

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regard the old purely for its age, as sacred. He has imposed the teaching of the truth upon all those who have the capacity to grasp it. "Muhammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—had only one irresistible miracle—the Qur'ān. But it is not irrational. How eloquent is the verse of al Busayri: 'God did not try us with anything irrational. Thus, we fell under neither doubt nor illusion.'"

As for Dr. Haykal's claim that this method is a modern method, that is rather questionable. In holding such a claim, Dr. Haykal was reconciling the scholars who are his would-be critics. He himself has acknowledged that this method was the method of the Qur'ān. It is also the method of Muslim scholars of the past. Consider the books of *kalām*.³ Some of them insisted that the first duty of the adult is to know God. Others held that the first incumbent duty is to doubt; for there is no knowledge except by means of proof and argument. Although the process of verification is a kind of deduction, the premises of such reasoning must be either self evident, mediately or immediately given to sense, or dependent upon unmistakable experimentation and generalization, following the rules of logic. The slightest error in any premise or in the form of reasoning vitiates the whole proof.

Al Ghazzālī, the great teacher, followed exactly the same method. In one of his books, he reported that he had decided to strip his mind bare of all former opinions, to think and to consider, to compare and to contrast, then to rethink all the proofs and all the evidence step by step. After all this reconstruction he reached the conclusion that Islām is true, and thus established a number of views and arguments regarding its nature. He did all this in order to avoid conservatism, to achieve faith with certitude, founded upon truth and argument. It is this kind of faith arising from rational conviction which, all Muslims agree, cannot but be true and bring about salvation.

The same method or deliberate repudiation of all creeds, as a preliminary to investigation and scholarly study, is found in most books of *kalām*. Doubt is indeed an old method; and so is experimentation and generalization. The latter is founded upon observation; and it is not new with us at all. Neglected and forgotten in the orient since it took to conservatism and irrationalism, this old method was taken up by the West, purged clean, and used with great benefit to science and industry. We are now taking it back from the West thinking that we are adopting a new method of scientific research.

This method then is both old and new. However, to know a method is easy; to apply it is difficult. Men do not differ much in their knowledge of a certain law; but they stand widely apart in their application of it.

To suspend all prejudices, to observe, to experiment, to compare, to deduct and to extrapolate are all easy words. But for man standing under an inheritance of heavy biological and mental burdens, struggling against an oppressive environment of home, village, school, city and country, suffering under the tremendous weight of conditioning by temperament, health, disease and passion—how could it be easy for him to apply the law? That is the question, whether in the past or in the present. That is the reason for the proliferation of views and doctrines. That is the reason for the movement and change of these views from country to country and people to people. With every generation, philosophy and literature don new robes very much like women do. Hardly any theory or principle stands beyond attack, and none is an impregnable fortress. Change has even attacked the theories of knowledge which were venerated during long ages. The theory of relativity brought a whirlwind to accepted scientific principles. But soon, it too was put under attack. Likewise, the theories of nourishment and disease, of their causes and cures, are undergoing continual change. A closer look, therefore, will convince us that there is no security for the productions of our minds unless they are supported by convincing proofs. But what is the proportion of such secure productions of the mind to the long parade of theories which are produced by fancy, projected by sick minds, imposed by politics, or created by scientists who simply love to differ from their peers? This thought may perhaps sober such men of knowledge and science who are too proud of reason and depend on it alone. Such a thought may yet guide them one day toward the truth, to take shelter under the absolute conviction which it provides, the conviction of true revelation, of the holy Qur'ān and the veritable *Sunnah*.⁴

Let us now turn to Dr. Haykal and his book. A number of *mutakallimūn*⁵ have held that the knowledge which astronomy and the dissection of the human body provide clearly points to the fact that divine knowledge includes the most minute details of existence. I concur that the discovery and establishment of the laws and secrets of nature will, besides helping the human mind to penetrate what was incomprehensible before, finally support religion. In this vein, God said, "We shall show them

Our signs in the horizons as well as within themselves, and We shall continue to do so until they realize that Our revelation is the truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord witnesses everything?" (Qur'ān, 41:53). The discovery of electricity and all the theories and inventions to which it has led has made it possible for us to understand how matter may be transformed into energy and energy into matter. Spiritualism has helped us to understand the transcendent nature of the soul and shed light on the possibility of its separate existence, of its capacity to travel through space and time. It has helped explain many matters on which men differed in ignorance. Dr. Haykal has used this new knowledge in his novel explanation of the story of Muḥammad's *Isrā'*.⁶

To list the good points which Dr. Haykal has made in his book would take many long pages. Suffice it then to point to these contributions in a general way. Undoubtedly, the reader will realize the worth of this work and will learn much from Dr. Haykal's well documented arguments, fine logic, and penetrating insight. The reader will realize that Dr. Haykal's whole devotion has been to the truth alone, and that he has approached his task with a heart replete with the light and guidance of the revelation of Muḥammad, as well as with great awe for the beauty, majesty, greatness, and moral height of the life of Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him. Dr. Haykal is fully convinced that this religion of Muḥammad will surely deliver mankind from doubt, from dark materialism, and will open their eyes to the light of conviction, guide them to the divine light with which they will come to know God's infinite mercy. Dr. Haykal is confident that men will thereby come sooner or later to acknowledge the glory of God as heaven and earth already do, and praise the divine might before which all beings become humble. Indeed, he writes: "Indeed, I would even go further. I would assert that such a study may show the road to mankind as a whole to the new civilization to which it is currently groping. If western Christendom is too proud to find the new light in Islām and in its Prophet but willingly accepts it from Indian theosophy and other religions of the Far East then it devolves upon the Orientals themselves, Muslims, Jews 'or Christians, to undertake this study in all objectivity and fairness in order to reach and establish the truth. Islamic thought rests on a methodology that is scientific and modern as regards all that relates man to nature. In this respect it is perfectly realistic.

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But it becomes personalist the moment it leaves nature to consider the relationship of man to the cosmos as a whole and to his creator."⁷ Dr. Haykal goes on to say that "the pioneer fighters against this all-embracing paganism of modern times, however, are clearly distinguishable under close observance of the current flow of events. Perhaps, these pioneer forces will grow and become surer of themselves when scholarship has found answers to these spiritual problems through the study of the life of Muhammad, of his teachings, of his age, and of the spiritual world revolution which he incepted."⁸

Dr. Haykal's firm conviction is corroborated by real events. What we have witnessed today of the West's concern for the study of our heritage and the care with which western scholars study the legacy of Islām, its various contents, its ancient and modern history and peoples, of the fair treatment that some of them give to the career of the Prophet—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—and finally, what we know by experience of the necessary final victory of truth—all this leads to the consideration that Islām will spread all over the world. In this process, the strongest protagonists of Islām may well be its strongest enemies whereas its present alien antagonists may be Islām's adherents and defenders. As in the early period the strangers have supported Islām, strangers may yet help it achieve its final victory. It is said that "Islām began as a stranger and will return as a stranger. God bless the strangers!"

Since the Prophet—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—was the last of the prophets, and the world is to have no prophet after him, and since, as the revealed text has said, his religion is the most perfect, it is not possible that the *status quo* of Islām will last. Its light must necessarily eclipse all other lights as the rays of the sun eclipse those of the stars.

Dr. Haykal related the events of the Prophet's life closely to one another. His book therefore presents a closely knit argument. In every case, he has elaborated strong evidence and articulated it clearly and convincingly. His work is not only persuasive; it is pleasant reading and it moves the reader to keep on reading to the very end.

Furthermore, the book contains many studies which do not properly belong to the biography of the Prophet but are necessitated by the author's pursuit of questions related thereto. Finally, let me conclude this prefatory note with the prayer of the master of all men—may God's peace and blessing be upon him,

his house, and his followers: "God, I take shelter under the light of Your face before Whom darkness became light, by Whose command this world and the next were firmly established. Save me from Your wrath and displeasure. To You alone belongs the judgment, harsh as it may be when You are not pleased. There is neither power nor strength except in You."

15 February, 1935

Muhammad Mustafā al Marāghī
Grand Shaykh of al Azhar

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"God and His angels bless the Prophet. O men who have believed: Invoke God's peace and blessing upon him"

Qur'ān, 33:56

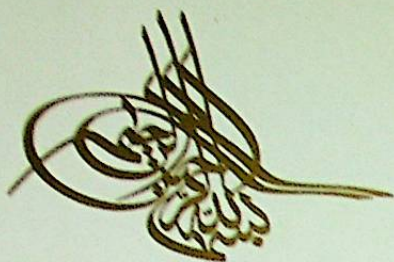
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise be to God, Lord of the universe,
The Gracious, the Merciful,
Master of the Day of Judgment.
You alone we worship; You alone we implore for help.

Guide us unto the straight path—
The path of those whom You have blessed,
Those who have not incurred Your displeasure,
Those who have not gone astray.

Amen

Qur'ān, 1:1-7



*In the name of God,
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